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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Sixteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 322nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 21 January 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHAN

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION (continued)

Combined initial, second and third periodic reports of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (continued) (CEDAW/C/STV/1-3 and Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Ollivierre (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) took a place at the Committee table.

2. Ms. OLLIVIERRE (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), responding to comments and questions by members of the Committee, said, with regard to female migration, that there had been no survey of the causes of the phenomenon or of ways to address it. Such an approach could, however, be considered by the Government, and covered in the next report. The fact that more women than men migrated was due to the fact that it was easier for women to obtain jobs in the tourism and domestic service sectors. The question of measures to reintegrate female migrants on their return to the country would also be dealt with in the next report. There was, in addition, internal migration; for example, both men and women from rural areas of the mainland, Saint Vincent, migrated to the Grenadine Islands to work in the construction and tourism industries, since the local population of the Grenadines was heavily engaged in the fisheries industry.

3. Regarding youth unemployment, the Government was making every effort to promote job creation and offered training in self-employment.

4. The Family Court had full jurisdiction over all family matters, except divorce. Adoption of the Family Court Act had been immediately followed by a national information programme, carried out by the Department of Women's Affairs and the Department of Legal Affairs in collaboration with the National Council of Women. The programme, involving community groups, schools, public servants and the police, had covered the Court's structure, role and mandate. The Family Court provided counselling to perpetrators and victims, with follow-up by welfare and probation officers. The programme also covered prison inmates. Legal aid and counselling were available through the Court, and the Government had established a network of lawyers working pro bono on behalf of women in need of protection from violence or seeking to establish property rights.

5. The Family Court was autonomous in structure, and its President was directly responsible to the Attorney General, the relevant policy-maker. The establishment of the Family Court had been very positively received by the women of Saint Vincent.

6. No shelters were available for victims of family violence, since the population of the country was small enough that their welfare could be entrusted to family and friends.

7. Turning to articles 1 to 3, she said that the Constitution and judicial system did not allow the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, or any other convention, to be directly incorporated into legislation, so that the High Court would not emphasize its provisions. Nevertheless, previous cases involving discrimination could be cited. The Department of Women's Affairs was not, however, aware of any case before the High Court for discriminatory practices by either men or women. A committee had been set up to review the Constitution.

8. While there was no specific legislation prohibiting discrimination against women, the Government made every effort to enact legislation which promoted gender equality. That approach was apparent in a number of measures, such as the Equal Pay Act and the Citizenship Act.

9. Regarding article 4, she noted that the Department of Women's Affairs had been established as a result of action by the women's movement, particularly the National Council of Women, in the 1980s. It reflected the Government's commitment to the advancement of women. Its mandate was to remove all discrimination against women, to promote the achievement of their full potential and to ensure their integration in the country's development. The Department had some autonomy within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Women's Affairs, and its Director advised the Government, through the responsible Minister, on policy decisions. The National Commission on the Status of Women, bringing together governmental, non-governmental and private sector participants, had an advisory role.

10. The Department of Women's Affairs and the National Council of Women worked in close collaboration on policy development and implementation. The Department had its own allocation for training and programme implementation. Its 1997 work programme included action to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and other international commitments through mechanisms for the advancement of women. Specifically, the Department would focus on mainstreaming gender policies through focal points in ministries and through community groups and organizations, would promote equality before the law in power sharing and decision-making, and would focus on women in social, cultural and economic life. The emphasis in 1996 had been on empowering women to overcome poverty through education and training.

11. With regard to article 5, social sensitization on gender issues and stereotyping were being addressed at the school level, with both boys and girls being exposed to similar discipline and training. Community action and information activities were also being undertaken.

12. A non-governmental organization, the National Committee against Violence, had addressed the issue of violence and had conducted information and publicity campaigns, making use of both radio and television. A Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women was commemorated every year in November, and from October to December the Department of Women's Affairs focused on such activities as information seminars, involving community groups and schools, radio and television programmes, a report on activities by the Department, church activities and rallies on issues relating to violence. Responsibility for

monitoring violence against women lay with the police, although the Department of Women's Affairs had a key role in addressing the broader issue.

13. With regard to teenage mothers and gender stereotyping, the Government was conducting an experiment to allow both rural and urban teenage mothers to return to school, although many chose to continue their education outside the school system. The Ministry of Health provided parenting training for both sexes and conducted sessions on gender stereotyping. While teenage mothers were not under pressure to leave the formal school system, there was sometimes societal pressure, in which case the Department of Women's Affairs and other government organs could act as mediators.

14. No study had been conducted of whether there were customs or practices damaging the status of women in the family.

15. With respect to efforts to educate the police and judges, programmes to make women aware of the relevant legislation had been undertaken since 1986. The Department of Women's Affairs was currently preparing a text on legislation, explaining the relevant laws and mechanisms. It was hoped that the text would serve as a reference for social and community groups and for government agencies. In that regard, complaints by women that the legislation enacted was not working effectively had been considered at various levels. The insensitivity of male judges was a specific concern to women in Saint Vincent and throughout the world.

16. The Government was seeking to address family life education at all levels, but changes in attitudes were slow. There was need for more family planning. The Government intended to continue its efforts to address the gap between political will and social conditions.

17. Under the Domestic Violence Bill criminal action in the High Court or Family Court could be initiated by either spouse for a protection order, or an occupation order entitling the victim to occupy the household and exclude the abuser. There was also provision for counselling and, in the case of injunctions, the power of arrest.

18. The maintenance of the children of teenage mothers was handled through the courts, which determined the amount of payments and oversaw their collection. Dowry, not being practised in Saint Vincent, was not a factor in violence against women.

19. Turning to article 6, she said that there was no research on traffic in women and prostitution. The issue would be addressed in the next report.

20. Regarding the involvement of women in public and political life, pursuant to article 7, women were active as mobilizers, campaign managers and activists, and could influence party candidacies. Each of the two political parties had a women's committee, so that women were able to ensure that the parties addressed their concerns. It was now up to women working within their parties to see that their power was reflected in Parliament. The use of affirmative action in connection with women's involvement in politics was now under discussion, but women were saying they preferred quality over quantity.

21. On citizenship for foreign spouses of nationals in connection with article 9, there was no longer any discriminatory practice, and all foreign spouses, men and women, were subject to the same procedures when applying for nationality.

22. She then turned to questions regarding article 10 of the Convention. Concerning possible measures to correct the fact that most school principals were men, she said that the Government had been addressing the situation, but that promotions and appointments were decided on merit, training, experience and seniority. Since the submission of the report, however, the percentage of female school principals had increased; more information would be provided in the next report.

23. Human rights education was not taught as a separate subject but was included in the social studies curriculum; for example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was thoroughly discussed, particularly at the secondary level and in student councils and youth forums. Referring to the question as to whether young women took advantage of opportunities to participate in sports, she said that the young women of her country were very fond of sports and were very active in that respect.

24. Leadership training programmes were organized for out-of-school youths and other vulnerable groups; there were also skills training programmes offered by various government departments. During their training, young people were placed in apprenticeships, and their subsequent employment was often arranged during that time. However, not all trainees were absorbed and, as a result, some became self-employed.

25. The Department of Women's Affairs had the main responsibility for organizing gender-sensitivity training in the public sector. Every effort had been made at the secondary and tertiary education levels, but nothing had so far been done at the primary and pre-primary levels. It was the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Women's Affairs that priority should be given to children aged 11 and above. Some thought could be given to extending the programme to children under 11; the next report would describe any measures taken in that respect.

26. A question had been asked on the role of churches in preventing teenage pregnancies. Although all the churches in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were aware of the need for such programmes they did not play a significant role in that respect. As to the ratio of boys to girls in coeducational schools, the Ministry compiled yearly statistics on student numbers in each educational institution, but there were no separate data on coeducational and non-coeducational schools. The Government would provide information on the subject in its next report. Referring to the question as to why more girls than boys graduated from the educational system, she said that it was well known that girls matured faster than boys; in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, girls were more serious and responsible, and they applied themselves much more in the academic field, whereas boys often chose to drop out of the system. Also, the women's movement gave young women considerable encouragement to take full advantage of educational opportunities.

27. A member of the Committee had asked why there were four non-coeducational schools. Two of those schools were privately owned and run by the Roman Catholic Church, one for boys and one for girls. The other two schools, which were Government-owned and managed, had been founded during the colonial period. All four were generally considered to be the "cream" of the educational system, and were attended by students from all levels of society.

28. Concerning programmes for literacy among schoolchildren, she said that there were no separate programmes for boys and girls; basic literacy and numeracy were taught at primary schools, and students were expected to be literate and numerate when they began secondary school. Specialist teachers were available at the primary level to assist children with reading disabilities.

29. Referring to questions on article 11, she said that the Equal Pay Act covered all workers, in both private and public sectors. Its implementation was the responsibility of a Labour Commissioner employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Labour. Persons working in the informal sector were often self-employed, and their employees tended to be family members; however, if there was any dissatisfaction, the usual procedure would apply in seeking redress under the Act. Any employer convicted of contravening the Act was liable to pay a fine of $2,000, and if the employer persisted, he would then be liable for a fine of $100 for each day the offence continued.

30. There were regulations to monitor health and safety in the "free zones". The appropriate trade union and the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Labour monitored compliance with the regulations. The Government was attempting to address the high level of unemployment among young women and rural women by offering skills training in different areas such as non-traditional professions and the hospitality industry. There was a need to further explore the manufacturing sector, and every effort was being made in that direction.

31. The Department of Women's Affairs was not aware of any habitual friction between customs officers and women traders, although there were times when officers had to be extremely vigilant, and specific reports had been investigated. The traders usually had a very good relationship with the customs officers and were treated very kindly; indeed, taxes and import duties were often not collected in full, due to the particularly friendly relations between the two groups. Female traders were considered to be the lifeblood of trade among the islands, and the Government supported their initiative.

32. It would be difficult to include women's work in agriculture and the informal sector in Government statistics on the gross domestic product, since data collection would be a very difficult task. The matter was, however, being considered by the Caribbean Community, and a programme would shortly be implemented in Trinidad and Tobago; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines hoped to learn from and adapt any useful experience derived from that programme.

33. Health and safety measures were embodied in labour legislation. Trade unions representing workers in the "free zones", and government labour inspectors visited workplaces to carry out spot checks and ensure that health and safety regulations were adhered to. Women made up the bulk of the trade

union movement in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Trade unions did not give any particular preference to either sex, since their purpose was to protect and seek justice for all their members, male and female.

34. The Labour Code was monitored by the Labour Commission and by the trade unions; non-compliance with the Code could be dealt with through the Commission or through the courts of law.

35. Subjects covered by the family life education programme included parenting, interpersonal relationships, family planning and sex education; the programme was available to men, women and adolescents. Adults and young people could obtain contraceptives through health centres, district clinics or the National Family Planning Programme. Information and counselling on family planning and contraception was provided by the Programme and by the Ministry of Health. A great deal of information on those matters was available; although the population was well informed concerning contraceptive methods, the problem often lay in putting that knowledge into practice. In many cases, women wished to use contraceptives but did not do so because their partners objected. However, women were increasingly demanding that their partners should use condoms, due to the increase in cases of acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). The process of change was, however, a long and slow one, and faster progress would be desirable.

36. Abortion was illegal in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. If doctors performed abortions, they did so without the knowledge of the Government, and so far, no women had reported any such occurrences to the relevant authorities. Termination of pregnancy was permitted only if the mother's life was in danger or if the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest.

37. Prenatal care was provided by all clinics and health centres in the country. Adequate information on HIV/AIDS was provided to teachers, students and parents, by means of clinics, schools, community groups, radio, television and pamphlets. All programmes on AIDS had addressed the issue of responsible sexual behaviour.

38. A question had been asked concerning the husband's consent which was required for a tubal ligation operation to be carried out on a woman. She pointed out that written consent from a spouse or next of kin was required for any surgery, and the same rule would therefore apply to a man wishing to have a vasectomy. Papanicolaou tests were available to all women at clinics and health centres, as were mammograms, both at Government expense. There was a cancer prevention programme, and breast self-examination was widely taught.

39. Turning to article 14, and referring to a question about terms of payment for the 35 per cent of farms that had been leased to rural women, she said the latter were expected to use the land for crop production, and once the crops were sold, to make regular payments to the Government. The repayment period was 15 to 20 years. The Government had also established credit schemes for rural farmers, most of whom were women, and a soft loan scheme for low-income farmers had been established through the national bank.

40. A question had been asked regarding measures to improve access to pre-school education in rural areas. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provided personnel via the Ministry of Education, Culture and Women's Affairs to assist with organizing and managing pre-school education. Pre-school centres were given a grant of $100 a month by the Government, and milk and other basic items were provided through the school feeding programme. However all pre-school centres were owned and operated privately. As to social security programmes for rural women, persons who were destitute received a monthly allowance from the Government, medical and dental care were provided free of charge, and assistance was given in the form of building materials and labour, school books, school uniforms and transportation.

41. Women had the right to own land or property in their own name, whether they were single or married. Legal protection from domestic violence applied equally to married women and to those in common-law relationships. However, the Government had no authority to tell anyone whom or when to marry; people were free to enter and leave relationships as they pleased, and forced marriages or unions were against the law. Women took full advantage of their legal rights in respect of marriage and of property ownership.

42. An unmarried woman could be allowed to adopt or be awarded guardianship of a child under the Adoption Act, provided that she was not shown to be an abuser or medically unfit. As for the compulsory registration of marriages, any person wishing to marry must first make an application; once that was granted and the marriage had been solemnized, it must be registered with the government registrar.

43. The law provided for equal sharing of marital property on the dissolution of the marriage. The information that had been requested concerning the texts of the relevant legislation in that respect would be forwarded to the Committee and would be referred to in the Government's next report.

44. Ms. ABAKA congratulated the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the excellent and candid responses she had given to the Committee's questions. The Government should review its policy concerning shelters for women who were victims of domestic violence, despite the existence of the excellent tradition of the extended family, which often provided shelter to those who needed it. A second look at the Government's policy on affirmative action would also be desirable. Affirmative action did not lower standards; it put women in a position to be as effective as possible in the professional positions in which they were placed, particularly decision-making positions.

45. Ms. SHALEV said that the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines might wish to re-examine its Family Life Education programmes from a gender perspective, in order to more fully address the problem of cultural stereotyping and issues of gender relations. She expressed concern that the consent requirement for medical procedures infringed on the autonomy and human rights of patients; she urged the Government to re-evaluate its legislation in that area so as to ensure full patient autonomy in medical treatment.

46. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL supported the suggestion voiced by Ms. Shalev regarding the Family Life Education programmes, and suggested that the

programmes should include treatment of equal relations between men and women, as well as of aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in order to rectify stereotypes and combat violence against women. She asked for the Government's confirmation, in the form of research studies, that women of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were not victims of trafficking or violence in the context of prostitution. She suggested that Government statistics on gross domestic product (GDP) should take account of unpaid work, as most such work was done by women and represented a significant contribution to the overall economy. With regard to violence against women, she suggested that the Government take General Recommendation No. 19 into account, as well as the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, as mandated by the Commission on Human Rights. She also requested further clarification of the consent requirements for medical procedures.

47. Ms. FERRER GÓMEZ asked for more thorough study of the emigration of women, citing the need to verify the causes of such emigration and its implications for the women involved. In the area of training, she suggested that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women should be more widely disseminated among members of the legal and other professions; more effort should also be made to familiarize women with their rights as affected by new laws and amendments. Moreover, members of the news media and the professions should be made more aware of harmful gender-related stereotypes and cultural patterns.

48. Ms. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ said that, with regard to the consent requirements for medical procedures, there was often a legitimate need for a second party or relative to be consulted regarding such procedures, especially in emergency cases.

49. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS said, with regard to the question of emigration, that the Government should examine trends in emigration over time, as well as the process of recruitment for emigrants and the benefit, if any, of the remittances such emigrants were sending home. She also requested more information about the impact of emigration on the relatives and children of the women involved, and its effect on the self-image of those women. She wished to know if and how the Government was monitoring emigration, and what policies it was formulating to deal with the phenomenon. In the area of family planning and sex education, she cited the need to address male sexual behaviour and job training for teenage girls.

50. The CHAIRPERSON joined previous speakers in citing the need to include unpaid domestic workers in GDP statistics, as the non-recognition of women's contribution to the economy in that area tended to exacerbate their subordinate and dependent status. She also suggested that the Government's next report should include more information on follow-up actions to the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as such major concerns as domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls.

51. Ms. Ollivierre (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) withdrew.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (continued)

WAYS AND MENS OF EXPEDITING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

52. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL, speaking in her capacity as focal point for the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, said that that Committee had met on two occasions in Geneva during 1996 and had considered the reports of Belarus, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Guinea, Hong Kong, Macao, Paraguay, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In its final observations regarding the implementation of women's rights, that Committee had recommended that Guatemala should modify certain articles of its Civil Code that were considered discriminatory towards women and that the Government of Guatemala should take steps to do away with traditional stereotypes that fostered the notion of the inferiority of women. Spain had been requested to take measures to preserve equal pay for equal work and to reduce the high rate of unemployment for women. El Salvador had been asked to take measures to combat violence against women, to revise its penal and civil codes and to ensure equal pay for equal work.

53. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had noted the high rate of maternal mortality and the lack of family-planning counselling in Paraguay; it had requested the Government to take measures to combat violence against women in general; and it had called for study of the special situation of indigenous women there. Hong Kong had been asked to revise existing gender-biased laws. Belarus had been requested to adopt new legislation to prevent discrimination against women with regard to employment. Finland had been asked to adopt more effective measures to ensure equal pay for equal work and to provide more complete statistics on domestic violence. That Committee had also expressed particular concern regarding sex tourism in the Dominican Republic and had called for a series of measures to combat the serious discrimination against women it had noted there.

54. In the context of the need for enhanced coordination among the various bodies involved in human rights, she said that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights regularly received information from non-governmental organizations. That Committee had also discussed several drafts of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but had not reached a consensus. It would be useful for CEDAW to know whether such a consensus had eventually been reached, and she requested the Secretariat to obtain that information by the time the Committee began considering the Optional Protocol to its own Convention. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was also preparing revised guidelines on the presentation of reports, in order to reflect the results of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. CEDAW could also make suggestions as to what it considered important for inclusion in those guidelines.

55. Ms. SATO, speaking in her capacity as the focal point for the activities of the International Labour Organization (ILO), said that during 1996, ILO had addressed three important issues concerning women: the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women; child labour; and unremunerated domestic work.

56. In March 1996, the Governing Body of ILO had approved proposals to give effect to the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women. Seven of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform were closely linked to the ILO mandate. Those areas included the feminization of poverty, inequality between men and women in education and training, economic participation by women and promotion of the rights of women and of the girl child. The Governing Body of ILO had approved a plan of action which focused on three goals: productive employment and poverty eradication; working conditions and social protection; and international labour standards and normative action on women workers.

57. The Governing Body had also decided to include an item on child labour in the agenda of the eighty-sixth session of the International Labour Conference to be held in Geneva in 1998, with a view to developing a new international instrument on child labour. The proposed instrument would target for elimination of such exploitative forms of child labour as bondage, sexual slavery and child pornography.

58. With regard to home work, the eighty-third International Labour Conference had adopted a Convention and a Recommendation, which contained the first comprehensive international standards in favour of homeworkers, a growing but often invisible workforce which was largely unrecognized in labour statistics and unprotected by legislation. The Convention would oblige States parties to adopt, implement and periodically review a national policy on home work aimed at improving the situation of homeworkers in such areas as occupational safety and health, social security, maternity benefits, training and remuneration. The Convention, which created a binding international obligation on States that ratified it, also called on Governments to include homeworkers in labour statistics and labour inspection systems. For its part, the Recommendation contained guidelines on how the national policy on home work should be implemented.

59. Ms. GONZÁLEZ MARTÍNEZ said that the oral reports just presented should be made available to members in writing in order to facilitate their consideration. Following up on the report by Ms. Bustelo García del Real, she asked whether the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had decided on its list of country reports for 1997 and whether there were any other specific references to the rights of women in country reports other than the ones cited. She also wondered whether the Committee should not look into the possibility of developing a single reporting format that would cover reports by States to all human rights treaty bodies. The Committee should also be mindful of the impact on submitting States of too frequent changes in its reporting guidelines.

60. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL said that most of the country reports contained references to the rights of women. It would be premature to consider a single report for all human rights treaty bodies. While the possibility did exist that information concerning discrimination against women might also be submitted to other treaty bodies, to date that had not occurred. In any event, the proposal could be considered further in Working Group I. Since the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was revising its guidelines for country reports, the Committee should advise them on those areas of concern to women.

61. Ms. BARE sought further clarification from Ms. Bustelo García del Real of the basis for the selection of the non-governmental organizations which provided information to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the manner in which such information was communicated.

62. Ms. CORTI noted that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was not the only body concerned with gender equality. Cooperation among the various human rights treaty bodies was ensured by the chairpersons, who made available to the other treaty bodies reports on the activities and methods of work of each treaty body. The point made by Ms. González concerning the harmonization of reporting guidelines among the various human rights treaty bodies was a valid one. Indeed, not only reporting guidelines but also policies must be reviewed in order to ensure greater harmonization of the work of the bodies concerned. She too would be interested to know how non-governmental organizations were selected, what kind of information they provided and how that information was used by the Committee.

63. Ms. TALLAWY said that, since the Committee was charged with monitoring the implementation of the Convention, it should first of all examine ways of making its work less boring and more dynamic and creative. It must therefore develop strategies for structuring its questioning that were tailored to the individual circumstances of each reporting State. The same questions, for example, could not be put to States in which the human rights situations of women were widely disparate. It would also be helpful if not only those experts who attended the pre-session meetings but all members of the Committee participated in the preparation of strategies and questions. She also wished to reiterate her views on the need for specialization by the various experts so that questions could be more sharply focused within the context of a pre-defined strategy.

64. Ms. ESTRADA CASTILLO said that she shared the views just expressed by Ms. Tallawy. It was important for the Committee to change the way in which it related to Governments and to devise strategies aimed at the specific situation of women in each reporting State. Specialization on the part of experts could only enhance the political weight of the Committee and the authority and influence which it commanded with the State party, since issues could be examined in greater depth and unnecessarily repetitive questioning prevented.

65. Ms. CORTI said that she felt obliged to counter the impression that the Committee did not know how to do its work. Members had consistently exhibited the maturity necessary to adapt their questions to the realities of the different reporting States. She agreed that the Committee and its work were constantly evolving and that its methods of work must therefore be continually adapted to those changes. However, much had already been done, such as the increase in the number of sessions from one to two each year, and it was not necessary, in her view, to change the strategy which the Committee had followed so far with success. It had not been possible in the past for meetings to be arranged between the Committee and interested non-governmental organizations, since only one annual session was held. There might be room for change in the manner in which reports were considered. The prepared responses to previous questions were often too lengthy and taxed the attention span of members. She wondered if it might be possible to do away with the oral presentations by beginning the consideration of reports in the form of a dialogue with the

Government representatives. It might be helpful to look at the practice of other treaty bodies in that regard.

66. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS, supported by the CHAIRPERSON, suggested that members might wish to save further comments for the meeting of Working Group I, which would be examining in greater detail the topic of ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee.

67. Ms. TALLAWY said that, in order to facilitate the work of Working Group I on the topic under discussion, the Secretariat should make available in writing the methods of work that were used by other human rights treaty bodies. She also wondered if it was possible to arrange an informal meeting with interested non-governmental organizations before the conclusion of the current session. Her earlier remarks about the need to revise the Committee's strategies should not be taken to mean that the Committee's strategies had been unsuccessful in the past. She had simply wanted to stress the need for continuous improvements in the Committee's method of work and for the adoption of strategies designed to enhance the effectiveness of its work.

68. The CHAIRPERSON recalled that an informal meeting had already been held the previous week with representatives of non-governmental organizations.

69. Ms. BUSTELO GARCÍA DEL REAL said that the Committee received oral and written information from certain non-governmental organizations. She had sought clarification from the Secretariat about the relationship between such organizations and the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, but no information had been forthcoming. On a personal note, she believed that of all the human rights treaty bodies the work of CEDAW was the most effective.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.